

be doing more to address the root causes, we should not turn our backs on those struggling to make ends meet by cutting benefits that help put food on the table for working families.

I believe we all share the goal of seeing a stronger economy that creates jobs and reduces the need for this kind of assistance. But until that time, let's not make the most vulnerable among us pay the steepest price.

SNAP BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ENYART) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, during the 35 years I spent in the military, it was my privilege to lead the outstanding men and women in our Armed Forces. Many are still serving today. They served with honor and distinction, yet here we are talking about treating the lowest paid of them like second-class citizens, unworthy of basic assistance in these difficult times.

I was elected to Congress to represent everyone in the 12th Congressional District of Illinois. I represent the poorest county in the State of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, 100,000 people in my district, most of them children or seniors, live below the poverty line. My district has a higher proportion of veterans than any other district in this State.

I answer to Active Duty military and veterans who rely on SNAP benefits to make ends meet. They exist in my district and in every district represented in this House. Mr. Speaker, does anyone in this Chamber wish to tell them that in this hour of need, their country is turning its back on them? Who among us wants to decide which of these veterans deserve assistance and which do not? I know I don't.

According to the Census Bureau, about 7 percent of people who report prior military service also report receiving SNAP benefits. Census data indicates that some 1.5 million households with a veteran are receiving SNAP benefits.

The base pay of most recent enlistees, from corporals on down, is at or below the \$23,050 poverty rate for a family of four. At military commissaries nationwide, nearly \$88 million in SNAP benefits were redeemed. Stars and Stripes reported that in 2011, food stamp purchases at military commissaries tripled during the preceding 4 years.

Just last month, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that approximately 900,000 veterans currently receive food aid and that proposed cuts would impact around 170,000.

According to The Hill newspaper, more than \$98 million in SNAP benefits were redeemed by veterans in 2012. The Huffington Post reports that in 2011, "both Active Duty members and retirees, together, used more than \$100 million in Federal food aid in the past year."

Sixteen percent of SNAP recipients are disabled, many of them are veterans. SNAP benefits are already scheduled to go down. On November 1, families of three will lose \$29 a month. Now, that doesn't sound like very much, but the daily per person per meal benefit will be less than \$1.40.

Recently, one Illinois veteran was quoted, saying, "I relocated, and the job I was supposed to get fell through. I lived off my savings but found myself needing to apply for emergency assistance to sustain until I found a job. I, like many others, was only receiving assistance for a time (5 months) but don't know what I would have done without it."

They served us with honor and distinction, Mr. Speaker. Some are still serving. Now it is time for us to serve them with a measure of honor and distinction of our own. I urge my colleagues to reject these shameful proposals which would cut this basic level of assistance to deserving recipients who need it now more than ever.

A SAD DAY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I probably don't need 5 minutes to say what I would like to say.

This is a very sad moment for the most powerful Nation in the history of this planet. We are on the verge of a government shutdown over ideology. I can remember in 1995, I was the mayor of Kansas City when the government shut down and the impact was Herculean, not just here in Washington, but around the country and around the world. And if we are proud to be Americans, it means that we pay our bills.

We are the only nation that still allows a vote by a legislature on paying our bills. Most countries won't do that because they don't need any disruption in paying their debts. We are close to declaring to the whole world that we don't pay our bills.

The other part that's troublesome is this whole issue of SNAP, or food stamps. And there are so many myths that roll around that it just turns my stomach.

I lived in a house with no running water or electricity until I was 7 years old. We moved into public housing. My father worked three jobs. He eventually was able to buy a home.

I know what it's like to be poor. I know what it's like to struggle. My father was able to send my mother to college when I was in the eighth grade, and then all four of his children graduated from college, too, with postgraduate degrees. So I am always insulted when I hear all of these irreverent and nasty comments about poor people. And we spread this stuff around the country to the point of absurdity.

We spread lies. "Well, people go into stores and they buy alcohol with food stamps." Well, we don't have food

stamps anymore. We have cards, Economic Benefit Transfer cards. And in spite of the lies that people tell, you can't buy alcohol with cards. You can't buy lottery tickets. I heard Members of Congress—this Congress—tell people that they know that people in prison are getting food stamps, and they've seen people buy alcohol with food stamp cards. It doesn't work. And it divides and damages this Nation.

The other lie, over 70 percent of the people receiving SNAP benefits are the elderly, the disabled, and children. And we are against helping them? Another 25 percent are people who work every day, it's just that they can't make enough to survive.

I remember growing up and my mother would say, Eat everything on your plate; there are starving kids in Africa. Well, I'm not sure how eating everything on my plate helped them—I'm still struggling with that—but there are starving people not far from here, and the government of the United States is saying we'd rather shut down than to have a program that deals with the people who are in trouble.

I just heard a few moments ago about a 101-year-old person whose daily Meals on Wheels had been reduced. 101 years old, and people are celebrating that, Mr. Speaker? This is a sad, sad day. And by the end of next week, when we are shut down, it's going to be much sadder.

UNITED STATES FINANCIAL CRISIS: 5 YEARS LATER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the meltdown of Lehman Brothers, and the 5-year anniversary of the greatest financial crisis in a generation that struck our country. This economic disaster nearly caused the destruction of our country's entire financial infrastructure and led to what we now call the Great Recession.

However, Wall Street, during the last 5 years, has actually profited greatly from this crisis and, in the process, has caused continuing financial failures of millions of Americans. JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley have all reported record profits during the recession.

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Wall Street, in the last 5 years, has regained all of its pre-crisis wealth with interest. Wouldn't the American people like to be in that position?

Meanwhile, Main Street has yet to see a real robust recovery.

The roots of the recession began in the late 1990s, when a majority in this Congress first overturned something called the Glass-Steagall Act, which separated speculative banking from prudent banking and then, in 2000, refused to regulate the trading of derivatives.

By hamstringing the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Securities Exchange Commission, Wall Street turned once stable investments into the toxic assets that brought down our economy.

American taxpayers were then asked to bail out these same banks responsible for trashing our economy and facilitating the single greatest redistribution of wealth from the poor and middle class to the rich in American history. Our middle class has shrunk.

And guess what?

The ranks of the poor shot up. It's no wonder people can't afford to pay for food. American citizens continue to struggle to recuperate their lost wealth from a clever banking system that stole their equity.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas recently reported that the cost of the collapse to the United States economy was up to \$14 trillion. Is it any wonder we have rising debt levels?

It could be more when you factor in potential permanent losses in earning power by Americans who aren't paying taxes anymore because they're not working yet.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, from 2000 to 2011, the median income for working-age households fell from approximately \$64,000 a year to \$55,000. This is a decline of nearly 13 percent.

The U.S. Census Bureau paints a similar bleak picture of the precipitous decline in American household income. It shows that the overall median income of households has continued to fall since the start of recession, and now, people are earning—guess what—similar to what their median income was in 1988. That's right. They've lost decades of income growth.

Income inequality has only widened during the crisis, where only the top 5 percent of income earners in our country saw an increase in their earnings between 2010 and 2011. The top is doing fine. Everybody else is not.

In addition, a GAO report earlier this year estimated the total loss in household equity from the crisis to be \$9 trillion. Those are some of your neighbors and mine. Indeed, what a property-taking that is.

Losses on this level prevent Americans from owning their own homes, opening their own businesses, or going to college and, ultimately, creating their own American Dream.

Meanwhile, on Wall Street, we see the enormous accumulation of banking assets and vast financial power in a handful of institutions. JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, all of them are making enormous profits, in fact, the highest profits in the nation, along with the oil companies.

Fifteen years ago, the assets of the six-largest banks were approximately 17 percent of gross domestic product. Today, estimates for the assets of those same banks are equivalent to over half of our gross domestic prod-

uct. So six institutions, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley control an enormous percentage of our banking system and, in turn, your future and our nation's future. That is too much power in the hands of the big six.

America is currently in the midst of the slowest recovery from a recession since World War II, and it's important that this Congress not sit idly by. In the 5 years since the recession, our economy has only managed to put more money in the pockets of the top 1 percent, ignoring the difficulties of the bottom 99 percent.

One way to begin rectifying this situation is to reinstitute the Glass-Steagall Act. I ask my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 129, the Return to Prudent Banking Act to restore the distinction between prudent banking and speculation. In addition, the executive branch should prosecute the predatory practices of those financial institutions that have led to this harm to the American people.

There should be no statute of limitation on the justice that is owed to the American people.

THE REPUBLICAN SNAP PROPOSAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong opposition to the deep cuts to nutrition programs that are being proposed this week by my friends on the other side of the aisle.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides critical food and nutrition support for hardworking families in cities and towns all across my home State in Rhode Island. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that more than 180,000 Rhode Islanders rely on this important program every day.

Once again, House Republicans have decided, rather than working to come to a bipartisan agreement on the farm bill, that they will instead pander to the far right of their party and, in doing so, impose real hardships on America's working families and put many children at risk of going hungry all across our country.

While protecting generous subsidies for agricultural corporations, my Republican colleagues are threatening the food security of our most vulnerable neighbors. So let's review this package of cuts to the nutrition program and consider its impact on children, seniors, veterans and families.

First, the Congressional Budget Office estimates this proposal would cut SNAP funding by at least \$40 billion. Some of these cuts would be particularly devastating for seniors and low-income families.

For example, this bill would eliminate categorical eligibility, putting

working families at greater risk of going hungry and eliminating the incentive to find work.

Currently, a working mother who makes a little more than \$24,000 a year qualifies for SNAP if her disposable income falls under 130 percent of the poverty line due to the rising cost of child care or rent. This bill would eliminate this provision and deny some working mothers and children in 40 States from receiving necessary nutrition assistance.

Make no mistake: this places a cruel burden on working families who can least afford it.

But it gets worse. Another provision would require the mother of any child a year of age to work or participate in a training program or risk losing their nutrition assistance. At a time of high unemployment and dwindling resources for job training, this bill means that a 2-year-old could go hungry if the child's mother can't participate in job training or find work.

Of course these provisions don't only impact working families. Even a veteran receiving disability compensation could lose their exemption and have their nutrition assistance terminated if they can't find a job under this bill.

These cuts imposed on the backs of disabled veterans, children younger than 6, and working moms are bad enough. But to compound these cuts, the Republican farm bill makes it more likely additional beneficiaries will be hurt as well.

This legislation would actually encourage individual States to kick people off nutrition assistance by promising them 50 percent of the savings.

Of course, some of this is old news. We're here debating this issue again. Shockingly, the immoral, outrageous cuts I've already outlined weren't enough for the conservative fringe. They weren't satisfied with cutting funding for SNAP. They demanded even deeper cuts that would force more children and more unemployed workers to go hungry. They've insisted that more seniors and veterans, the people who helped build this country, should be turned away at their local market.

The House Republican leadership was happy to comply, and they decided to make a bad bill worse. They doubled the cuts imposed on the SNAP program and chose to slash nutrition assistance by a total of \$40 billion. These newer cuts target jobless adults without children who live in areas with high rates of unemployment.

The National Association of Evangelicals said they were "especially concerned" about this proposal.

Let's not mischaracterize this as a new work requirement. The changes proposed in this bill tell people who are struggling to find work in a difficult economy that if their job search goes on longer than 3 months, they should go hungry too. But the bill does not provide additional workforce training resources, and it doesn't invest in job creation to help individuals find work.